THE

WORLD.

NUMBER CLV.

By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *December* the 18th, 1755.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to ſit at the feet of a Gamaliel in this city, in the capacity of a pariſh-clerk, which office I hold in commendam with the employment of an undertaker. The injuries I have ſuffered are ſo little cognizable by the laws of the land (till it ſhall pleaſe God to teach our ſenators ſo much wiſdom as to amend them in this particular) that I have none to whom I can appeal, but the WORLD; to whom I beg that you would pleaſe to preſent this my humble remonſtrance and propoſal.

I HOPE you will excuſe the trouble I now give you, not only becauſe I chuſe to ſubmit myſelf to the judgment of your court, but as I have reaſon to believe that the

the news-writers would not be faithful enough to lay this complaint before the public; thoſe gentlemen being the very parties concerned, and againſt whom it is to be lodged.

My caſe, ſir, is this. As I was one morning furniſhing my head with the news of the day, to my great ſurpriſe I read a paragraph, which informed me that a very rich gentleman of our pariſh died the day before. This ſtartled me, as I had never heard of his illneſs, and therefore had employed nobody to watch him in his laſt moments, and to bring me the earlieſt intelligence of his death, that I might not be wanting in my reſpects to the family by my condolence, and the offers of my ſervice in paying the laſt duties to ſo worthy a maſter. I was apprehenſive too, leſt ſome ſharper looker-out might be before-hand with me, and run away with the job. I therefore whipt on my black coat and white periwig, as faſt as I could, to wait on the diſconſolate widow. I rung gently at the door, for fear of diſturbing her; and to the footman, who opened it, delivered my duty and condolence to his lady, and begged, if ſhe was not provided with an undertaker, that I might have the honour to bury Mr. Deputy.

The ſervant gaped and ſtared, and from the great concern he was under for the loſs of his maſter (as I apprehended) was rendered ſo ſtupid, that he ſeemed not readily to underſtand what I ſaid. Before I could new frame my meſſage, to put it, if poſſible, into more intelligible words, I was myſelf ſeized with the utmoſt horror and confuſion, at ſeeing the apparition of the deceaſed ſtalk out of the compting-houſe, which opened into the paſſage where I ſtood. I obſerved a redneſs in his countenance, more than was uſual in *dead people*; and indeed, more than he himſelf was wont to wear when

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he was alive: and there was a ſternneſs and ſeverity in his features, beyond what I had ever ſeen in him before. Strait a voice more dreadful than thunder burſt out, and in the language of hell, ſwearing, curſing, calling me a thouſand names, and telling me he would teach me to play tricks with Him, he dealt me half a ſcore ſuch ſubſtantial blows, as preſently convinced me they could proceed from no ghoſt. I retreated with as much precipitation as I could, for fear of falling myſelf into the pit, which I hoped to have dug for Him.

THUS, ſir, the wantonneſs of the news-papers diſappointed me of furniſhing out a funeral, deprived me of my dues as clerk, got me well thraſhed, and will probably loſe me the gentleman's cuſtom for ever: for, perhaps, next time he dies, he will order another undertaker to be employed.

NOW, ſir, is it not a ſhame, that people ſhould thus die daily, and not a ſingle fee come to the clerk of the pariſh for a burial? and that the news-writers, without commiſſion from his Majeſty, or licence from Warwick-lane, ſhould kill whom they pleaſe, and we not get a ſhilling to comfort us in the midſt of ſo much mortality?

THERE are other inconveniences, though of an inferior conſideration, which may attend this dying in print. A young heir at Oxford, juſt come of age, reads that his father was carried off by an apoplective fit ſuch a day: catching the lucky minute, he marries that divine creature, his taylor's daughter, before the news can be contradicted. When it is, fear of the old gentleman's diſpleaſure makes him bribe his new relations to ſecreſy for a while: in proceſs of time, he marries a lady of fortune and family by his father's directions: Tatterrella raves with all the ſpirit and dignity of a lady of the Britiſh fiſhery; proves her prior marriage; not only calls, but

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records lady Mary a whore; baſtardizes the children of the ſecond venter, and old Snip's grandſon runs away with the eſtate.

How often have theſe diſturbing papers whirled up expectants of places to town in their poſt-chaiſes, to whirl back again, with the old SQUEEZE, and "I ſhall not for-"get you WHEN the place is vacant?" How often has even the reverend divine ſuffered the violent concuſſions of a hard-trotting horſe for above threeſcore miles together, to wait on the patron of a benefice vacated by the Evening-Poſt; where he has met with the mortification of ſmoaking a pipe with the incumbent? Perhaps a lady too, whoſe tenderneſs and ſenſibility could not permit her to attend her ſick huſband to Bath, reads an account of his death in the papers. What ſhrieks, what faintings, what tears, what inexpreſſible grief afflicts the poor relict! And when ſhe has mourned in half a week, as much as any reaſonable widow would do in a whole year; and (having paid the legacy of ſorrow to his memory in three days, which by the courteſy of England ſhe might have taken a twelvemonth for) begins to think of a *new huſband*, home comes the *old one*, and talks in rapture of the virtues of Bath-water. While all the ſatisfaction the news-writers give this unfeignedly afflicted poor lady, is, "The death of A. B, Eſq; men-"tioned in theſe papers laſt week, proves a miſtake."

I KNOW but one inſtance where any regard to us pariſh-clerks has been had, or our intereſts in the leaſt taken care of in theſe temporary and occaſional deaths; and that was of a gentleman of rank, who was generally reported and allowed for dead. His heirs at law, not caring to bury the real body, for reaſons beſt known to themſelves (though one of thoſe reaſons might be becauſe it was alive) yet convinced of the reaſonableneſs

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that a funeral ſhould follow a demiſe, dug up a poor drowned ſailor out of a hole on the ſhore, into which he had been tumbled, and with great ſolemnity interred the *departed* knight by proxy. There was juſtice in this; every man had his due. It was acting with the wiſdom of an old Athenian.

A PRACTICE of the Athenians may ſerve as an anſwer to ſuch (if any ſuch there are) who from modern prejudices object to the funerals of people not really dead. Our doctor told us in one of his ſermons upon regeneration, that among theſe Athenians if one who was living, were reported to be dead, and funeral obſequies performed for him—(which plainly implies their cuſtom of celebrating funerals for perſons who were dead in their news-papers, though they were not ſo in reality)—if afterwards he appeared, and pretended to be alive, he was looked upon as a prophane and unlucky perſon, and no one would keep him company. One who fell under this misfortune (it matters not for his name, though I think the doctor called him Harry Stonehouſe,* or ſomething like it) conſulted the oracle how he might be readmitted among the living: the oracle commanded him to be regenerated, or new chriſtened; which was accordingly done, and grew to be the eſtabliſhed method of receiving ſuch perſons into community again.

AND here in England before the reformation, as I am informed, it was uſual when a rich perſon died, to celebrate yearly and daily maſſes, obits, and commemorations for him; ſo that one who died but once, ſhould be as good as buried a thouſand times over: but among us it is juſt the reverſe; a man may die here a thouſand times, and be buried but once.

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* *Ariſtinus.*